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LECTURES ON MEDICAL SCIENCE.

Delivered to the Students of the Botanico-Medical College of Ohio.

BY A. CURTIS,

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN—

Presenting myself before you as an advocate of Medical Reform, it is manifestly my duty, first, to prove that Medicine, as it is generally taught, understood, and practised, is not what it should be. The evidences on which I may safely rest this proposition, are the concurrent declarations of the most enlightened professors and practitioners of medicine in modern times; and the innumerable failures of the practice, daily witnessed by us all, in cases in which we ought to expect success.

The denunciations of Medical Theories and Practices, by professors and practitioners, are both general and particular. Permit me to present to you a few examples of each class.

1. GENERAL DENUNCIATIONS OF MEDICINE.

SYDENHAM.—"Physic," says Sydenham, "has ever been pestered with hypotheses, the multitude and precariousness whereof, have only served to render the art uncertain, fluctuating, fallacious, mysterious, and in a manner unintelligible." * * "Certain it is, that not a single medicine has been discovered by their assistance, since their introduction into physic above two hundred years ago, nor have they let the least light into the affair of administering medicines properly in particular circumstances; but rather served to bewilder us, to perplex practice, and create disputes that are never to be decided without recourse to experience, the true test of opinions in physic."—Preface, page 5.

"Our misfortune proceeds from our having long since forsook our skilful guide, *Hippocrates*, and the ancient method of cure founded upon the knowledge of conjunct causes that plainly appear, insomuch that the art which is this day practised, being invented by superficial reasoners, is rather the art of *talking* than of *healing*."—Ib., page 14.

DR. BROWN, who studied under the famous Dr. William Cullen of Edinburgh, lived in his family and lectured on his system, (a system that has had as many advocates and practitioners as any other of modern times,) says, in his preface to his own works, "The author of this work has spent more than twenty years in learning, scrutinizing and teaching every part of medicine. The first five years passed away in hearing others, in study-

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ing what I had heard, implicitly believing it, and entering upon the possession as a rich inheritance. The next five, I was employed in explaining and refining the several particulars, and bestowing on them a nicer polish. During the five succeeding years, nothing having prospered according to my satisfaction, I grew indifferent to the subject; and, with many eminent men, and even the very vulgar, began to deplore the healing art, as altogether uncertain and incomprehensible. All this time passed away without the acquisition of any advantage, and without that which, of all things, is the most agreeable to the mind, *the light of truth*; and so great and precious a portion of the short and perishable life of man, was totally lost! Here I was, at this period, in the situation of a traveler in an unknown country, who, after losing every trace of his way, wanders in the shades of night."

I would here remark, once for all, that I do not always agree with the authors in all the sentiments quoted. I receive no man's mere opinions as infallibly true, till I have demonstrated them by evidences that will not admit of a doubt. For example, I cannot admit with Dr. Brown, that he "had spent all that time without the acquisition of any advantage." He had discovered many a valuable fact for future use. If he had not learned, directly, what medicine was, he had discovered, indirectly, what it was not; and thus narrowed the limits of his fruitless researches, as well as stored up experience as the foundation of his future medical philosophy. I shall hereafter have occasion to show that such conclusions are very injurious to the mind that draws them.

Dr. J. Abercrombie, Fellow of the Royal Society of England, of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, and First Physician to His Majesty in Scotland, says, "There has been much difference of opinion among philosophers, in regard to the place which medicine is entitled to hold among the physical sciences; for, while one has maintained that it 'rests upon an eternal basis, and has within it the power of rising to perfection,' another has distinctly asserted that 'almost the only resource of medicine is the art of conjecturing.' "

D'Alembert.—"The following apologue," says D'Alembert, "made by a physician, a man of wit and philosophy, represents very well the state of that science. 'Nature is fighting with disease; a blind man armed with a club, that is, a physician, comes to settle the difference. He first tries to make peace. When he cannot accomplish this, he lifts his club and strikes at random. If he strikes the disease, he kills the disease; if he strikes nature, he kills nature.' " "An eminent physician," says the same writer, "renouncing a practice which he had exercised for thirty years, said, 'I am weary of guessing.' " Dr. Abercrombie continues—

"The uncertainty of medicine which is thus a theme for the philosopher and the humorist, is deeply felt by the practical physician in the daily exercise of his art."—Intel. Pow., page 293.

Gregory.—"All the vagaries of Medical Theory," says Dr. Gregory of London, "like the absurdities once advanced to explain the nature of gravitation, from Hippocrates to Broussais, have been believed to be sufficient to explain the phenomena, [of disease,] yet they have all proved unsatisfactory."—Practice, page 31.

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"The science of medicine has been cultivated," continues Gregory, "more than two thousand years. The most devoted industry and the greatest talents have been exercised upon it; and, though there have been great improvements, and there is much to be remenbered, yet, upon no subject have the wild spirit and the eccentric dispositions of the imagination, been more widely displayed. * * Men of extensive fame glory in pretending to see deeper into the recesses of nature than nature herself ever intended; they invent hypotheses, they build theories, and distort facts to suit these aerial creations. The celebrity of many of the most prominent characters of the last century, will, ere long, be dicovered only in the libraries of the curious, and recollected only by the learned."—Page 29.

I must here add that Dr. Gregory's statements respecting medical theories, are endorsed by his American editors, Professor Potter, of the University of Maryland, and S. Calhoun, M. D., Professor in Jefferson Medical College, Pennsylvania. They are therefore sanctioned by the famous school of Baltimore, which disputes with the Pennsylvanian, for the honor of being ranked the first in the United States.

Dr. James Graham, the celebrated Medico-Electrician of London, says of medicine, "It hath been very rich in theory, but poor, very poor in the practical application of it. Indeed, the tinsel glitter of fine-spun theory, or favorite hypothesis, which prevails wherever medicine hath been taught, so dazzles, flatters, and charms human vanity and folly, that, so far from contributing to the certain and speedy cure of diseases, it hath, in every age, proved the bane and disgrace of the healing art."—Page 15.

Dr. T. J. Todd says, "Medicine has never yet known the fertilizing influence of the inductive Logic."

Hannemann.—In Germany, the most intelligent and experienced physicians have been long convinced that the administration of heroic medicines, is not the true divine art of preventing and curing disease; and their late writers, among whom Hannemann stands pre-eminent, have undertaken to reform the old practice, so far as to administer with a cowardly, instead of a heroic hand, the ten millionth part of a grain of poison, instead of two hundred and fifty grains.

Lieutaud.—Of the Parisian School, in the last century, Dr. Joseph Lieutaud, Physician to Louis the 16th, &c., said, in his Synopsis of Medicine, page 1, that, in what had been written before his day, he found it "difficult to disengage certainty from uncertainty, and to separate the useful from the trivial. Hence many of no mean rank have doubted whether it would not be *better to give up the undertaking*, and confine themselves to new observations, out of which, when well investigated and arranged, there might be produced a *sounder theory*. I will leave this to the more learned, and only candidly and briefly publish what I have collected from a practice of thirty years."

For such opinions and actions, Professor Potter, in his translation, if memory serves me, says, "I am not worthy to hold a candle to him." But even this synopsis did not answer, and many new theories have lately been formed in that school, among which one of the latest and most celebrated, is that of M. Broussais. But even of this, which condemned all its pre-

decessors, as others had done before it, Professor G. S. PATTISON, of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, says, "This fact," [that M. Andral can believe in somnambulism, which at one time could see only the state of the internal organs of the body; at another only that of the fluids,] is worthy of being noticed; it teaches us that the mind which is credulous enough to give credit to *animal magnetism*, will believe any absurdity, even the greatest of all absurdities, the "PHYSIOLOGICAL SYSTEM" of M. Broussais. The student whose mind becomes infatuated by being taught to believe in the specious but most fallacious doctrines of Broussais, on entering on his profession, becomes a most dangerous character; and, unless he is induced to pause and discard his system, after the sacrifice of a few victims at its shrine, *the desolation he will produce*, in the district in which he practises, will be incalculable."

"It may be said, 'Surely a few leeches and a little gum water will kill nobody.' Let the physician never forget that it is his duty to cure his patients, and that, should he lose them by the employment of trifling and inert remedies, when they might have been saved by an energetic and vigorous system of treatment, he becomes really and truly their destroyer." [No, Dr. Pattison, not so bad as that.] "We do hope and trust," says this Editor, "that the intelligent practitioners of this country, whose extensive practical knowledge of their profession, must have convinced them the diseases of the United States are generally of the most acute character, and such as require for their cure, the most vigorous treatment, *will exert themselves to put down* the "PHYSIOLOGICAL SYSTEM" of M. Broussais, which we are sorry to find, is attempted to be inculcated and made fashionable, by the publication of that author and by teaching his doctrines."—Reg. and Lib., vol. 1, page 7.

I cannot forbear remarking here, that, under my own observation, those practitioners who followed, during the prevalence of the Asiatic Cholera in 1832, the "vigorous treatment" indicated in the famous letter of instructions from the pen of this same Dr. Pattison, "produced a desolation" not indeed "incalculable," for it was easily embodied in the single word "universal," while the more cautious practitioners who did little or nothing—a practice more nearly allied to that of Hannemann and Broussais, lost but very few.

DR. BENJAMIN WATERHOUSE, of the Harvard University at Cambridge, near Boston, Mass., who was one of the three professors first appointed in the Medical Department of that Institution, after lecturing in it for twenty years, retired, saying of all he had been so long and so zealously teaching, "I am sick of learned quackery."

DR. JAMES THACHER, author of the "American New Dispensatory," of "The American Modern Practice," "The Biography of American Medical Men," &c., says, "The melancholy triumph of disease over its victims, and the numerous reproachful examples of medical impotency, clearly evince that the combined stock of ancient and modern learning is greatly insufficient to perfect our science. * * Far, indeed, beneath the standard of perfection, it is still fraught with deficiencies, and altogether inadequate to our desires."—Mod. Practice, page 8.

DR. JACOB BIGELOW, Professor in Harvard University, says, in his

Annual Address before the Medical Society in 1835, "The premature death of medical men, brings with it the humiliating conclusion that while the other sciences have been carried forward within our own time, and almost under our own eyes, to a degree of unprecedented advancement, medicine, in regard to some of its professed and important objects, (the cure of disease,) is still an *ineffectual speculation.*"

Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell, late Professor in the Medical College in New York City, in his Preface to "Darwin's Zoonomia," says, "After the different projects for methodizing this department of knowledge, (medicine,) which have successively been offered to the public with so little advancement to true science, the friends of medical improvement, will joyfully accept of something that promises to lead them from arbitrary system to natural method."—Page 29.

Of this "natural method," according to Dr. Mitchell, the late learned Dr. Mason Good, Professor &c. in London, says:

"How deeply is it to be regretted that so much genius and learning, so much valuable time and labor, and, above all, such lofty hopes and predictions, should have been productive of so small a result." While Darwin expresses the hope that he has laid the foundation of Medical Science on a basis "which shall stand unimpaired, like the Newtonian Philosophy, a rock amid the waste of ages," Dr. Good declares—Nosology, page 29.

"No generous spirit can read this passage without a sigh; nor probably without exclaiming in the words of Pope—

"Oh, blindness to the future—kindly given."

And I have somewhere read a statement of a late learned Professor, that the learned, ingenious and voluminous works of this same Dr. Good, is worthy of a condemnation as severe as that above bestowed on Dr. Darwin.

Dr. Eberle says, (Prac. Med., Preface, page 6,) "It is now generally and very justly believed that the artificial, classic, ordinal and specific distinctions of nosology, [the forte of Dr. Good,] have an unfavorable influence on the progress of comprehensive and philosophical views in pathology! Thus the whole foundation of that immense work, "The Studies of Medicine," is pronounced not only useless, but pernicious!

Dr. Rush says, in his lectures in the University of Pennsylvania, "I am insensibly led to make an apology for the instability of the theories and practices of physic. Those physicians generally become the most eminent, who soonest *emancipate* themselves from the tyranny of the schools of physic. Our want of success is owing to the following causes: 1st, our ignorance of the disease; 2nd, our ignorance of a suitable remedy."—Page 79.

Dr. Chapman, Professor of the Institutes and Practice of Physic in the University of Pennsylvania, remarks; "Consulting the records of our science, we cannot help being disgusted with the multitude of hypotheses obtruded upon us at different times. No where is the imagination displayed to greater extent; and, perhaps so ample an exhibition of human invention might gratify our vanity, if it were not more than counterbalanced by the humiliating view of so much absurdity, contradiction and falsehood."—Therapeutics, vol. 1, page 47.

"To harmonize the contrarieties of medical doctrines is, indeed, a task as impracticable as to arrange the fleeting vapors around us, or to reconcile the fixed and repulsive antipathies of nature."—Ib. page 23.

"As it is, we are plunged into a Dedalian labyrinth almost without a clue. Dark and perplexed, our devious career, to borrow the fine illustration of a favorite writer, resembles the blind gropings of Homer's cyclops round his cave."

"Not the slightest of the causes which have conspired to retard the progress of physic, is the eagerness for rash and indiscreet generalization, by which, at all times, it has been distinguished. But if ever we are to strip our art of its 'glorious uncertainties, [I should say more properly, "its inglorious certainties,"] and bring into the practice of it something of exactness, it will be by pursuing a *very different course.* To effect so important a *revolution*, we must studiously examine the phenomena of disease, and, with an attention no less unbiassed, observe the operation of medicines. Thus, *perhaps*, we *shall ultimately learn* to discriminate accurately the diversified shades of morbid action, and to apply to each its appropriate remedies."—Ther., vol. 1, page 49.

"Availing ourselves of the privileges we possess, and animated by the noblest impulses, let us cordially co-operate to give to medicine a new direction, and attempt those great improvements, which it imperiously demands."—Ther., vol. 1, page 51.

I perfectly agree with Professor Chapman, in the above statements respecting what is taught in the schools for Medical Science, and will most cordially co-operate with him in effecting "so important a revolution" as "to bring into the practice, something of exactness."

Professor Jackson, of the University of Pennsylvania, tells us, in the preface to his "Principles of Medicine," (page 1,) that "the discovery of new facts, has shed a light which has changed the whole aspect of "Medical Science," and the works which have served as guides, are impaired in importance and value; they lead astray from the direction in which the science progresses, and new ones are demanded, to supply the position in which they become faulty."

"The want of a treatise on the Practice of Medicine, in the room of those usually placed in the hands of students and young practitioners, had long been felt." * * "At first I contemplated merely a practical book, compiled in the usual manner, founded on the experience of preceding writers, compared with, and corrected and extended by my own. I had made a considerable progress in this method, when I was arrested by the conviction that it was essentially defective; that it did not meet the spirit of the age; that it did not answer the purposes of a rational instruction; that it did not supply the deficiency I had felt to exist in the commencement of my profession; that it had been followed in a servile spirit, from the remotest eras of the science, and is, most probably, the cause that, after so long a period after its cultivation, its practice still continues of uncertain and doubtful application."

He therefore strikes out an entirely new path, and writes a large book which is no sooner out of the press than Dr. J. V. C. Smith, of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, pounces upon it with a severity almost equal to that of Dr. Pattison upon Broussais. So they go.

Dr. John Eberle, Professor successively in Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati, and Lexington, Ky., says, of the fashionable theories of medicine, "The judicious and unprejudiced physician will neither condemn nor adopt unreservedly any of the leading doctrines advanced in modern times."—Pref. to Prac., page 1.

That is, not a tyro, mark it, but "the judicious and unprejudiced physician," the man who is best instructed in them, and the most capable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, even such a man is not certain whether not a few wild notions of some idle theorist, but "the leading doctrines," the fundamental principles of modern medicine, are right or wrong! Shade of Dr. Eberle! you surely will not haunt me for trying to determine this unsettled question!

Dr. L. M. Whiting, in a Dissertation at an annual commencement in Pittsfield, Mass., said: "The very principles upon which most of what are called the theories involving medical questions, have been based, were never *established:* They are and always were false, and consequently, the superstructures built upon them were as "the baseless fabric of a vision"—transient in their existence—passing away upon the introduction of new doctrines and hypotheses, like the dew before the morning sun." B. M. & S. Jour., vol. 14, page 183; and,

"Because *all systems* which have hitherto been promulgated, have been false, and consequently transient, it by no means follows that *there may not be* found one which will stand a tower of strength, unharmed by the rude shock of opposition's bursting wave, through all succeeding time: and such a theory, it is conceived, may and will be formed of disease."—Ib. page 186.

"Speculation has been the garb in which medicine has been arrayed, from that remote period when it was rocked, in the cradle of its infancy, by the Egyptian priesthood, down to the present day; its texture varying, to be sure, according the power and skill of the manufacturer, from the delicate, fine-spun, gossamer-like web of Darwin, to the more gross, uneven and unwieldy fabric of Hunter; its hue also changing by being dipped in different dyes as often as it has become soiled by time and exposure. And what has been the consequence? System after system has arisen, flourished, fallen and been forgotten, in rapid and melancholy succession, until the whole field is strewed with the disjointed materials in perfect chaos—and, amongst the rubbish, the philosophic mind may search for ages, without being able to glean from it hardly *one solitary well established fact.*"

"If this is a true statement of the case, (and let him who doubts take up the history of medicine;) if that enormous mass of matter which has been, time out of mind accumulating, and which has been christened Medical *Science,* is, in fact, nothing but hypothesis piled on hypothesis; who is there among us that would not exult in seeing it swept away at once by the besom of destruction?"—Ib., page 187—8.

For these sweeping denunciations of all the labors of his predecessors, Dr. Smith of the Journal, pronounces Dr. Whiting an "original thinker," and his dissertation an "effort to diffuse light in regions of darkness." I shall hereafter show that I do not agree with Dr. Whiting that, in all these

labors "the philosophic mind may search for ages without being able to glean from it hardly one solitary well established fact." I believe they have disclosed facts enough, if well understood, to establish the science of medicine on an immovable basis, and I am very far from desiring that all these facts should be "swept away at once by the besom of destruction." They have established many an important fact that I hope will never be forgotten. They have proved incontestibly that "a physician should be nature's servant;" that "bleeding tends directly to subdue nature's efforts; that "all poisons, suddenly and rapidly extinguish a great proportion of the vitality of the system;" that whatever be the quantity used, or manner of application, all the influence they inherently possess is injurious, and that they are not fatal in every instance of their use, only because nature overpowers them—in short, they have tried, and proved false and mischievous, so many errors and combinations of errors in theory and practice, that he who would now come at the truth, if he do no more than merely avoid the repetition of their fruitless and ruinous experiments, will so far diminish the chances of error, that any new plan he may propose must approximate near, very near to the right. I might fill a folio of a thousand pages with similar "besom"-like denunciations of medicine as taught in the schools; but your countenances have long since cried—"it is enough."

Bear with me, however, while I present the view of the subject proposed by my second head, viz.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE—Part 2nd.

Particular Denunciations.

It is sometimes said that the above and similar denunciations, are too, general in their character, and that they are the results of disappointments and difficulties in different cases; whereas, the several branches of medical theory and practice, are generally pretty well understood. Let us examine these Questions.

The important branches of the healing art must be the Theory of Disease and its divisions; of the action of organs under its influence, and the nature, use and modus operandi of remedies, &c. &c.

"*Disease,*" says Dr. Whiting, "has never, till lately, been investigated."—Dissertation.

Characters or Symptoms of Disease.—"Since medicine was first cultivated as a science, a leading object of attention has ever been to ascertain the characters or symptoms by which particular internal diseases are indicated, and by which they are distinguished from other diseases which resemble them. But, with the accumulated experience of ages bearing upon this important subject, our extended observation has only served to convince us how deficient we are in this department, and how often, even in the first step of our progress, we are left to conjecture. A writer of high eminence, (Morgagni,) has even hazarded the assertion that those persons are most confident in regard to the characters

of disease, whose knowledge is most limited, and that more extended observation generally leads to doubt."—Intel. Pow., pages 294—5.

Professor Chapman says, "Perhaps we shall ultimately learn to discriminate accurately the diversified shades of morbid action, and apply to each its appropriate remedies. As it is, we are plunged into a Dedalian labyrinth almost without a clue. Dark and perplexed, our devious career, to borrow the fine illustrations of a favorite writer, resembles the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round his cave.—Ther., vol. 1, page 49.

Progress of Disease.—"If such uncertainty hangs over our knowledge of disease," says Abercrombie, "it will not be denied that at least an equal degree of uncertainty attends its progress. We have learned for example, the various modes in which internal inflammation terminates—as resolution, suppuration, gangrene, adhesion and effusion; but, in regard to a particular case of inflammation before us, how little notion can we form of what will be its progress or how it will terminate!—Abercrombie, page 295.

Action of external agents.—An equal or even a more remarkable degree of uncertainty attends all our researches into the action of external agents on the body, whether as causes of disease or as remedies; in both which respects their action is fraught with the highest degree of uncertainty.—Intel. Pow., page 295.

"In regard to the action of external agents as causes of disease, we may take a single example in the effects of cold. Of six individuals who have been exposed to cold in the same degree, and, so far as we can judge, under the same circumstances, one may be seized with inflammation of the lungs, one with diarrhœa and one with rheumatism, while three may escape without any injury. Not less remarkable is the uncertainty in regard to the action of remedies. One case appears to yield with readiness to the remedies that are employed; on another which we have every reason to believe to be of the same nature, no effect is produced in arresting its fatal progress, while a third which threatened to be equally formidable, appears to cease without the operation of any remedy at all."—Pages 295—6; see also page 23.

Experience of little value.—"When, in the practice of medicine, we apply to new cases the knowledge acquired from others which we believe to have been of the same nature, the difficulties are so great that it is doubtful whether in any case we can properly be said to act from experience, as we do in other departments of science." * * "The difficulties and sources of uncertainty which meet us at every stage of such investigations, are in fact so numerous and great, that those who have had the most extensive opportunities of observation, will be the first to acknowledge that our pretended experience must, in general, sink into analogy, and even our analogy too often into conjecture."—Abercrombie, Intel. Pow., page 299.

"What is called experience in medicine," says Professor Jackson, "daily observation and reflection confirm me in the conviction, is a fallacious guide, not more entitled to the implicit confidence claimed for it, than when it was thus characterized by the great father of the science—*fallax experientia*. In fact, experience cannot exist in medicine, such

as it is in those arts in which experiments can be made under circumstances invariably the same &c. And, after proving what he has said, he adds, "But medicine *is* a demonstrative science, and all its processes should be proved by established principles, and be based on positive inductions. That the *proceedings* of medicine *are not* of this character, is to be attributed to the manner of its cultivation, and not to the nature of the science itself." Hence, he "abandoned" his first "plan" and "attempted the establishment of [new] principles of general application" &c. Here we have the positive declarations of an able and approved professor, that "the proceedings" of medicine are not science; that he believes there is such a thing as medical science capable of demonstration, and that his book is "an indicator to the line of march now taken up" towards this demonstrative science, which he has not yet discovered. Surely Dr. Jackson will delight to see even our little taper volunteer its services to aid his own brilliant flambeau, in bringing into view, this much desired, long sought, but still to him eluding science.

Fever.—According to the doctrines of the schools, *Fever*, in its various forms, is at once the most common, the most obstinate, and often the most dangerous enemy with which they have to contend. But what do they know of it? Hear their own declaration.

"Fever," says GREGORY, "is the most important, because the most universal and the most fatal of all the morbid affections of which the human body is susceptible." * * "The physician must always be prepared to expect its occurrence. It is that by the presence or absence of which all his views of treatment are to be regulated; whose rise, progress and termination, he always watches with the closest attention. [He surely ought to have learned something about it by this time, if he has so watched it for four thousand years.] Some idea may be formed of the great mortality of fevers from the statement of Sydenham, who calculated that two-thirds of mankind die of acute diseases properly so called, and two-thirds of the remainder, of that lingering febrile disease, consumption. Fever has proved a fertile theme on which the ingenuity of physicians in all ages has been exerted; and a glance at the attention which it has received from every medical author, both ancient and modern, would be sufficient to impress upon any one the importance of the doctrines it embraces.

How *difficult* is the study of fever, may be inferred from this, that, though so much has been written concerning it, there is no one subject in the whole circle of medical science, which still involves so many disputed points." Still, much as they are disputed, the Doctor adds, "The doctrines of fever are of paramount importance, and therefore constitute, with great propriety, the foundation of all pathological reasoning."—Greg. Prac., vol. 1, pages 43—'4.

"It has been a favorite topic of inquiry among all writers on fever What is its nature?—In what particular state of the fluids or solids does it consist? The subject has been prosecuted with great diligence, but the result of the investigation is very unsatisfactory. * * All their theories are open to many and strong objections."—Ib, pages 49, 50. "The pathology of fever is so obscure, that it affords but little help in determining the plan of treatment."—Page 35.

Dr. Thacher, the venerable author of the American New Dispensatory, says:—

"Notwithstanding the great prevalence of fever in all ages and in all climates, and the universal attention which it has excited among medical observers ever since the days of Hippocrates, the disease still remains the subject of much discussion; and its essential nature, or the proximate cause of its symptoms, is still a problem in medical science."—Thacher's Practice, page 198.

"The history of Practical Medicine consists of little else than a review of the doctrines which have risen and sunk again, concerning the nature and treatment of fever." * * "It is in this department that observation and research have been most industrious in accumulating materials, and that hypothesis has luxuriated in her wildest exuberance.—Eberle's Practice, vol. 1, page 13.

Inflammation.—Numerous hypotheses or opinions respecting the true nature and cause of inflammation, have for ages been advanced, and for a time, sustained; but even at the present day, the various doctrines appear to be considered altogether problematical."—Thacher's Practice, page 279.

Hundreds of similar testimonies respecting Pathology might be adduced, but time and space forbid to be formal.

Mackintosh asks, "Who knows any thing about disease?" and he gives abundant cases to prove that not a few of the most eminent physicians of the past or present century knew very little about it.

Dr. L. M. Whiting, after summing up the attainments of the most eminent physicians in all ages, on the subject, asks what they knew, and answers for them—"nothing—absolutely nothing!" True, he intimates that the "scalpel of the pathologist" will yet develop the matter; but Mor gagni says, "they who have examined the most bodies are the most doubtful of the correctness of any information from them;" and

Rush, still more bold, honest and candid, says:

"Dissections daily convince us of our ignorance of the seats of disease, and cause us to blush at our prescriptions."—"What mischiefs have we done under the belief of false facts and false theories! We have assisted in multiplying diseases; we have done more—we have increased their mortality."—Rob., page 109. Mackintosh gives practical proofs of this. in his account of surgical operations for dropsies and tumors in the pelvic region.

Dr. Good says, The language of medicine is 'an unintelligible jargon.'—Nosology, Page 35—44.

Dr. Chapman says, "The Materia Medica is crude, wild and unregulated."—Vol. 1, page 31.

Blood-letting.—"We have no infallible index to direct us. It is impossible, from the state of the circulation in fever, to point to any certain criterion for the employment of the lancet; the state of the pulse is often ambiguous and deceptive. Circumstances require the nicest discrimination, as the result is often very different in cases seemingly analogous. A precipitate decision is fraught with danger, and a mistake may be certain death."—Thacher's Practice, page 208.

"Some patients are bled who do not require it, and the consequences are injurious; others are bled who cannot bear it, and who ought to be treated by cordials, and the result is fatal."—Mackintosh, page 690.

"No physician, however wise and experienced, can tell what quantity of blood ought to be taken in any given case."—Ib., page 418.

"In putrid fever, bleeding is not advisable. The loss of a few ounces of blood, being equivalent to a sentence of death."—Gentlemen's Med. Pocket Book, page 35.

Dr. Hunter said, "Blood-letting is one of the greatest weakeners, as we can kill thereby."

Prof. J. F. Lobstein says, "So far from blood-letting being beneficial, it is productive of the most serious and fatal effects—a cruel practice—a scourge to humanity. How many thousands of our fellow-citizens are sent [by it] to an untimely grave! how many families are deprived of their amiable children! how many husbands of their lovely wives! how many wives of their husbands! Without blood there is no heat, no motion in the system—in the blood is the life. He who takes blood from the patient, takes away not only an organ of life, but a part of life itself.—Essay on Blood Letting.

"So zealons are the blood-suckers of our age," says Salmon, in his "Synopsis Medicinæ," "that they daily sacrifise hundreds to its omnipotence, who fall by its fury, like the children who, of old, passed through the fire to Moloch, and that without any pity, left to commiserate the inexplorable sufferings of their martyrs, or conscience of their crimes which may deter them in future from such villanies, the bare relation of which would make a man's ears tingle, which one cannot think of without grief, nor express without horror!"

"An eminent physician has said that, after the practice of blood letting was introduced by Sydenham, during the course of one hundred years, more died of the lancet alone, than all who in the same period perished by war.—Rob., page 121.

"It would appear, that the first, or inflammatory stage of puerperal fever, the stage in which bleeding has been so eminently successful, has no *discovered character* by which it can be distinguished from the second, in which this operation is forbidden, after a lapse of a few hours."—Dewees, Females, page 441.

"We would ask, What is the evidence that the first stage has run its course? This is an important question, and one, from our present data, that cannot, we fear, be answered satisfactorily. Hitherto this condition of the disease has been infered rather than ascertained."—Ib., page 438.

The same author says, page 372, "Our bleedings are not always renewed from the arm, for, as soon as we get the pulse pretty well down by this means, we have leeches applied over the parts nearest to the seat of the inflammation, in such numbers as shall abstract at least eight or ten ounces of blood, and encourage their after bleeding by the application of moist warmth. Should these abstractions of blood not prove effective, and pain, fever and other unpleasant symptoms continue, but especially great pain and tenderness in the parts; if the pulse does not call for general bleeding, we repeat the leeching, nor stop until the end is answer-

ed, or until we are convinced our efforts will be unavailing, by the approach of the second stage, or by the addition of peritoneal inflammation.

"The immediate effect of profuse and repeated bleeding is exhaustion. While this exhaustion continues, there is a diminution of action of every kind, and hence an imposing appearance of relief to the symptoms of disease; but it no sooner takes place than an instinctive effort is made by the vis medicatrix naturæ, to remedy the evil hereby produced, and to restore the system to its former balance of power. This balance is called a rallying or reaction of the living principle. The arteries contract to adapt themselves to the measure of blood that remains; the sensorial organ is roused to the secretion of a larger proportion of nervous power to supply the inordinate drain that takes place during the general commotion, all is in a state of temporary hurry and urgency, and for the most part irregularity of action, while the instinctive effort is proceeding. And hence, no sooner is the immediate effect of prostration, exhaustion or syncope overcome, than the heart palpitates, the pulse beats forcibly with a jerking bound, the head throbs, the eyes flash fire, and the ears ring with unusual sounds. Now it often happens that these concurrent signs are mistaken for proofs of latent or increased vigor, instead of being merely proofs of increased action; and action too, that adds as largely to the exhaustion as the depletion that produced it; and the unhappy patient is bled a second, a third, and even a fourth time, till no reaction follows, at which time it is strangely supposed that the entona, plethora, or inflammatory diathesis is subdued and lulled into a calm, because the patient has been so far and fatally drained of his living principle, that there is no longer any rallying or reactive power remaining, and gives up the ghost, in a few hours, *to the treatment*, instead of the disease."—Good's Study of Medicine, vol. 1, page 407.

Here we have the direction of Dr. Dewees to bleed "as long as the unpleasant symptoms continue," and the declaration of Dr. Good, that those symptoms *will continue* "till the patient has been so far and so fatally drained of his living principle, that there is no longer any rallying or reactive power remaining, and gives up the ghost in a few hours, *to the treatment* instead of the disease!"

Hence, to bleed scientifically, as taught in Philadelphia and London, and wherever else these text books of the highest authority are adopted, is to bleed till the patient "Gives signs of woe that all is lost," Or, in plain English, it is to commit wilful murder.

Purgatives.—Many patients are over purged with drastic medicines, to the aggravation of the disease, while others are bunged up with opium." Mackintosh's Pathology, page 690.

"Purgatives, besides being uncertain and uncontrollable, often kill from the dangerous debility they produce."—Gregory's Practice of Physic, page 94.

"Such is the diversity of circumstances in different examples of fever, and so great is the uncertainty of the effects of mercury on the system, that no precise rule for its administration can be given or regarded."—Thacher's Practice, page 214.

"Mercury, in some instances, exhibits at once all the phenomena of a

poisonous action, productive of the most mischievous and sometimes even fatal consequences."—Chapman's Therapeutics, vol. 2, page 258.

"*Mercury*," says Dr. Rush, "is the *Goliah of Medicine*." It is certainly a Goliath to destroy; it is the uncircumcised Philistine of medical science, who defies the living armies of the living God. The numbers slain by his arm, let India and America and the world witness. The multitude of the valley of Hammon Gog would not equal their countless hosts, if mustered on the field of battle.

"The "*heroic medicines*," as they are emphatically called, deserve, indeed, a considerable share of the praise of the Cæsars and Alexanders of the world; powerful to destroy, heroic in blood and havoc and desolation! It was the boast of Alexander, "I have made Asia a desert, I have trampled down its inhabitants and prostrated its ancient renown."—Robinson, page 141.

Opiates.—"The habitual use of these destructive palliatives" is condemned by Dr. Eberle, as "never failing to operate perniciously on the whole organization."

Poisons in general.—Notwithstanding the various modes of their action, and the difference in many of their symptoms, they all agree in the sudden and rapid extinction of a great proportion of the vitality of the system.—Med. and Surg. Journal, vol. 9, page 43.

Hooper says, "The most active in small doses, form the most valuable medicines."

Barton says, "Poisons are, in general good medicines."—Medical Botany.

I have no doubt that "the lancet and poisons," as many eminent physicians have declared, "have destroyed more lives than the sword, pestilence and famine." Yet these are the articles of medicine most relied upon in the treatment of disease.

I remark, again, that a folio might have been added on this head, but I trust enough has been given to justify Dr. Whiting in the declaration:

"We may apply to Therapeutics, so far as the materia medica is concerned, the same sweeping phrase which we have already had the temerity to introduce with regard to pathology—that it is a perfect chaos."—Dr. Whiting, B. M. and S. J., vol. 14, page 189.

Science.—I might assign, as another reason why I am an advocate of medical reform, the fact that medicine, as taught in the schools, is not science.

Dr. Abercrombie says, page 24, "The object of all science is to ascertain the established relations of things, or the tendency of certain events to be uniformly followed by certain other events."

But, on page 293, he proves medicine to be "the art of conjecturing," the "science of guessing."

Dr. Geegory says, Practice, vol. 1, page 34, "The perfection of every science, consists in the exact assignment of effects to their causes, and the expression of their operation in intelligible language. But, on page 29, he says, "Upon no subject have the wild spirit and eccentric dispositions of the imagination been more widely displayed than in the history of medicine."

Drs. Gregory, (page 1,) Bigelow, (Annual Address,) Hooper, Hays, and others, say that "The object of medical science is to prevent and cure disease."

But I have proved by the testimonies above, that the art of preventing and curing disease, is neither taught nor understood in the schools.

Dr. Jackson says, (Principles, page 11,) "The true science of medicine *is* a demonstrative science, and all its processes *should* proceed from established principles, and be based on positive inductions. That the *proceedings* of medicine *are not* of this character, is to be attributed to the manner of its cultivation, not to the nature of the science itself." * * "Let medical science be prosecuted in the spirit, and its investigations be conducted under the precepts of a positive philosophy, and there can be no hesitation in believing that a degree of certainty *will* attach to the calculations and attend the practice of the science [calculations of the science and the practice of the art] of which, at present, it is difficult to form a comprehension."

Here we have not only proof that we ought to be reformers in medicine, but great encouragement to become such. Similar encouragement is given by Drs. Rush, Mitchell, Waterhouse, Bigelow, and thousands of others both dead and living. The same Dr. Whiting who said (Medical Journal, vol. 14, page 181,) that "disease has never until quite recently, been investigated," says also, (page 186,) that "there may and will be formed a system [or theory of medicine] which shall stand a tower of strength, unharmed by the rude shock of opposition's bursting wave, through all succeeding time." * * And page 189, "A theory of therapeutics *will* be formed which shall be as immutable as any other natural law." And he adds too, that "this is to be done simply by observation and experiment." Just as we are doing it in the Botanic Practice. Gentlemen, let *us* enter the lists, and contend manfully for this glorious prize which is yet to be won.

After such an exhibition of the fruitless, the melancholy and often destructive and devastating results of medical theorising and experimenting for four thousand years, is it a matter for reproach—nay, is it not praiseworthy in any man to declare himself a friend to medical reform, improvement or even revolution, if the Art of Healing cannot be acquired without it? But I hasten my third proposition.

It may be said that all the above are mere opinions—that the true healing art is understood and practised by the great mass of enlightened physicians of the present day. To this I oppose,

1st. The testimony of those very men who most ardently and ably support it. Testimony against one's *self*, is admitted to be the strongest that can be adduced. If they understood the art, they would surely "heal themselves" if no more. But what say they?—

"The premature death of medical men," says Bigelow, "brings with it the humiliating conclusion that, while the other sciences have been carried forward within our own time, and almost under our own eyes, to a degree of unprecedented advancement, medicine, in regard to some of its professed and most important objects, (the cure of disease,) is still an *ineffectual speculation*."

Rush exclaims, "We have assisted in multiplying diseases—we have done more—we have increased their mortality."

Add to these, the declarations above quoted, respecting the injurious influence of their heroic medicines; and, if any thing more is wanted, I refer to—

My third head, viz: The devastation which disease is continually making under your own observation, in the health, comfort, constitutions and lives of your friends and neighbors and society around you—(In charity I will say,) notwithstanding the utmost efforts of the most intelligent and benevolent physicians to stay his ruthless hand)—and now I ask if it be not praiseworthy in me, to stand up before you the fearless and uncompromising advocate of radical reform in the science of medicine?

If, however, you should still decide that there is neither merit nor justice in my conduct, then I answer—

I am one of six children whom my parents raised to maturity without the aid of doctors or poisons, and sent out into the world with good constitutions in a healthy state. In process of time they were all attacked with disease, and five of the six applied for relief to the advocates of medicine as taught in the schools. Though in all these cases, the vital energies contended long and fiercely with the terrible *Goliaths* of the art, yet eventually the envenomed fangs of that reptile system fastened so deeply upon their vitals that four of the five, after "lingering from four to eight years of miserable existence, in extreme debility and emaciation," most heartily welcomed death as "a friendly stroke to put a period to their sufferings," while the fifth, my worthy brother, Dr. Samuel Curtis, of the New York College of Physicians, is only lingering a little longer, in consequence of having arrested the execution of the blow by a thorough and judicious use of "nature's remedies."

I too, was sick as well as they. I too, was entreated by my medical as well as other friends, to use the curative means prescribed by the boasted science of medicine, and so anxious were the former to save what they called a useful life, that some of the most distinguished of them, offered me their services without reward. But, happily for me, I had studied too thoroughly before I needed their art, the books containing their science, to have any confidence in their ability to cure me. Hence it is doubtless attributable to my total rejection of their heroic remedies, that I now stand before you, like the unscathed oak in the midst of the whirlwind's desolation—yes, gentlemen, the poisonous darts of medical destruction have left me, like Logan, almost without a mourner! insomuch that, but for the hope of living to do something for the mitigation of the physical and moral evils that are spreading misery, death and desolation through the world, like him, "I would not turn upon my heel to save my life."

If, therefore, I repeat it, you or society in general, refuse to me any credit for my course, I here declare to you that, in obedience to the dying commands of a long and sorely afflicted victim of medical poisoning, who of all others, was nearest to my heart, like Hannibal, I have sworn to "wage an uncompromising and eternal warfare against quackery and every species of medical poisoning." This vow shall be performed while I have a voice to proclaim the truth, or a hand to guide the pen to leave a trace that once I lived!